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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how the principles of bilingual education were incorporated by an adult education teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) into ESL instruction. This approach is seen as useful only when all the students have the same native language. The method is supported by evidence from the literature of minority student education that more English is learned in a bilingual setting than in an English-only environment, and by Stephen Krashen's theory of the effectiveness of comprehensible input. Techniques used by the teacher include: alternating languages in class or providing reading material in the native language and discussion in English; inviting advanced ESL speakers and faculty as guest speakers using both languages; lowering students' affective filters with familiar or welcoming decorations from the students' country and culture or celebrating holidays from the students' culture; and translating only when explanation is ineffective. Several bibliographies are included. (MSE)

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THE WHAT AND HOW OF BILINGUAL ESL

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Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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The purpose of this presentation is to analyze the extent and intent of using L1 in an ESL class. However, before I begin, let me define what I mean by "Bilingual ESL". My definition of Bilingual ESL is that it is a method of instruction in which the theory and practice of bilingual education is applied to the ESL classroom.

As an important note, let me emphasize that this unique combination is applicable only to those ESL classes in which L1 is the same for all students. I began developing this combination methodology when presented with the unique opportunity of adult ESL classes with students with the same first language. I am a credentialed bilingual teacher in California and have a master's degree specializing in adult ESL.

For more information about the effectiveness of bilingual education I recommend Beyond Language: Social and Cultural Minority Students: A theoretical Framework and Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework. To give you an overview of these publications, I have included the Table of Contents from each report. They are available from the California State Department of Education in Sacramento, California. In both of these publications the evidence is overwhelming that more English is learned in a bilingual setting than in an English only environment.

I have also included a list of additional readings from Foundations for Teaching English as a Second Language, Chapter 8 "The Role of ESL in Bilingual" by Muriel Saville-Troike.

Briefly, let me mention some of the theory and research of bilingual education which supports this blending of methodology. The Language Acquisition Theory of Stephen Krashen holds that if we provide an enormous amount of comprehensible input, more English will be acquired. If we understand messages encoded in a second language, it is comprehensible input. Effective teaching methods follow this principle of comprehensible input. That is, there is a great amount of input, there are messages of interest to the students, and there is a relaxed atmosphere so the students focus on the message. Comprehensible input can be provided through interaction with native L2 speakers, through ESL, and by teaching content in L1.

You may ask when is L1 used to provide comprehensible input? From my personal experience, the knowledge of when to use L1 with individual students develops over time. For me, with each student, it is a personal individualized decision. However, with a class, some possibilities suggested by Krashen are to:

1) alternate days in L1 and L2
2) present the prelesson in L1, the lesson in L2 and the review in L1
3) present the prelesson, lesson and postlesson in L2 and test in L1

At times I have asked a bilingual tutor to ask questions in L2 and have the students answer in L1. Other times I have provided reading material in L1 and then discussed it in class in L2.

Another area in which I apply the theory of bilingual education to ESL classes is with what I call my "Progressive Guest Speakers Series". I invite advanced ESL students and faculty members as guest speakers. Some of the language use organizations I have asked the speakers to follow are:

1) Introduction in L2, presentation in L1, and summary in L2
2) Presentation in L2, students' questions in L1, and presenters' answers in L2
3) Introduction, presentation, and summary given alternately in either language as long as there is no direct translation. Students are free to ask questions in L1 and L2 and the speaker chooses to answer in L1 or L2.

Dulay and Burt (1977) have postulated the existence of an Affective Filter. Krashen (1981) hypothesized that a high filter is caused by low motivation, high student anxiety and low student self-esteem. Basically, it is mental barrier to L2 acquisition that students create in an L2 setting.

According to Krashen, the objective for the teacher is to lower the Affective Filter to the point that the students forget they are using L2. A beginning of what I do to relax the students and thereby lower their Affective Filter is:

1) to post a "Welcome" sign in a wide variety of languages (available from Monterey Institute, 425 Van Buren, St., Monterey, CA 93940)
2) to decorate the classroom with pictures from the students' country and culture
3) use material in L2 based on students' background (for Spanish speaking students I recommend Stories from Latin America published by Prentice-Hall)
4) to have the students complete "ice-breaking" activities throughout the semester rather than just the first day or week
5) hold potlucks celebrating holidays from the students' culture.

James Cummins reports in Schooling and Language that the majority of studies that report cognitive advantages associated with bilingual education are when L1 is continued to be developed while L2 is being acquired. I apply this by encouraging the Spanish speaking ESL students to take Spanish for Spanish Speakers, a class offered at our college.

In applying the theory of bilingual education to ESL the question of translation may occur. I translate only when the explanation about what we are learning is getting in the way of actually learning it. The students feel very good that they are contributing to the class as they "help" me translate. Other times I sincerely demonstrate that I am still learning a second language. I do not generally have students translate for each other. The exception is when I am presented with an extremely timid student with low self esteem and little education in L1. That rare student receives as much support as possible and some translation from peers seems to relax the student enough to continue coming to class to learn English.

In conclusion, I have a word of caution. The term "bilingual education" is politically explosive in some settings. If blended ESL and bilingual education methodology is something you would like to work on, read more about bilingual education and keep your department chair and administration informed of what you are doing.

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Not only is ESL an essential component of bilingual education, but also instruction and explanation in the native language contribute significantly to the effectiveness of ESL.

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